

29. On a Blood-sucking Gamasid Mite (*Ichoronyssus serpentium*, sp. n.?), parasitic on Couper's Snake. By STANLEY HIRST, F.Z.S.*

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(Text-figures 1 & 2.)

It is quite probable that the species dealt with below is identical with that to which Gervais gave the name *Dermanyssus natricis* in the year 1844, but as there is some doubt on this point, I am describing it under a new name. Gervais says very little about the structure of his species, and the only account of it which is at all complete is that written by Paul Ménégin in 1884, who created a new genus (*Ophionyssus*) for it. References to several earlier papers and works in which this parasitic mite is mentioned are given in Ménégin's paper. Unfortunately he makes a serious mistake in his description, stating that there is no ventral plate (plastron) on the lower surface of the body, and that the "oviducte" has the form of a longitudinal slit. It is quite clear that he mistook the narrow genito-ventral plate for the genital opening itself. In reality, the genital aperture is quite normal in appearance, being transverse and protected by the usual delicate chitinous flap or operculum, which is joined posteriorly to the genito-ventral plate. *Ophionyssus natricis* is mentioned by G. Canestrini in his 'Prospetto dell' Acarofauna Italiana,' and also by Prof. Antonio Berlese in his well-known work on the Acari, etc. of Italy; but these authors did not have the opportunity of examining specimens, and the latter expresses doubt as to the validity of the genus, rightly considering it as probably identical with *Leiognathus* Can. [= *Ichoronyssus* Kolenati].

It may be of interest to note that, in having two dorsal shields and also minute intermediate platelets, the adult females described below present a strong resemblance to the protonymph stage of certain other species of *Ichoronyssus* (for instance, to that of *I. bacoti* mihl).

Genus ICHORONYSSUS Kolenati.

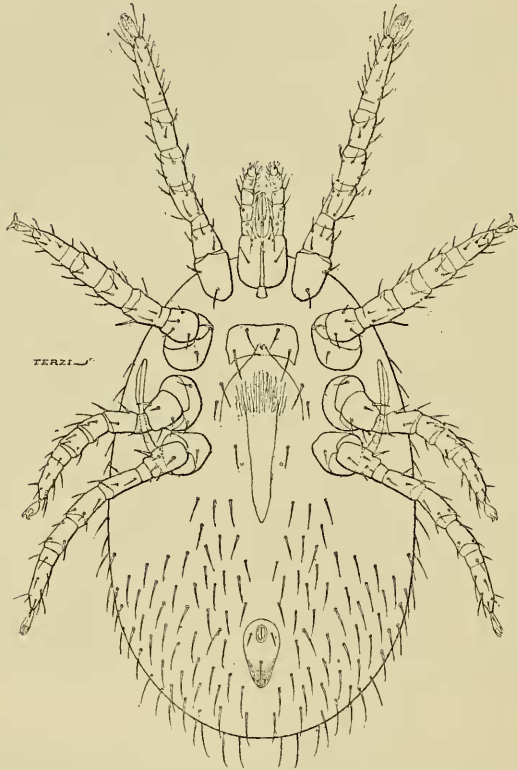
Dermanyssus (ad part.) Gervais, in Ins. Apt. iii. p. 223 (1844); *Ichoronyssus* Kolenati, Wien. ent. Monatschr. ii. p. 5 (1858); id. Sitz. K. Akad. Wiss. Wien, xxxv. p. 173 (1859); *Ophionyssus* Ménégin, Bull. Soc. Zool. France, p. 109 (1884); *Ophionyssus* + *Leiognathus* G. Canestrini, in Prospet. Acarof. Ital. part i. p. 121 (1885); *Liponyssus* of some recent authors, but probably not that of Kolenati.

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ICHORONYSSUS SERPENTIUM, sp. n. ?

♀. *Body* long oval in shape. *Dorsal surface* furnished with numerous hairs, which are not very long and are distinctly curved; apparently the fine little offshoot or hair present near the end of the hairs of certain other species of *Ichoronyssus* (for instance, on those of *I. bacoti*) does not occur on the hairs of this

Text-figure 1.

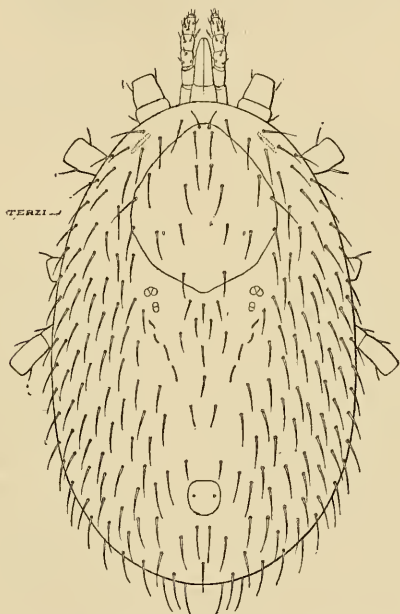


Ichoronyssus serpentium, ♀. Ventral view.

species. There are two *dorsal shields*, the anterior one being comparatively large (length $\cdot 3$ mm., width $\cdot 27$ mm.), but the posterior one, which is situated far back near the hinder end of the dorsal surface, is very small and inconspicuous. Outline of *anterior shield* shaped almost like that of a lemon; twenty hairs

are present on its surface, six pairs practically forming a longitudinal series running down the middle and four other hairs being placed on each side, three of these lateral hairs being marginal. The minute *posterior shield* is not provided with any hairs, but one or more pairs of minute punctations, which may possibly represent the sockets of hairs, occur on it. On each side of the dorsal surface, a little behind the anterior shield, there are two distinct but very minute platelets, and they are followed posteriorly by about four very inconspicuous

Text-figure 2.

*Ichoronyssus serpentium*, ♀. Dorsal view.

(obsolete) linear platelets, arranged in a longitudinal series. Numerous hairs are present on the posterior part of the ventral surface, but they are shorter than those on the dorsal surface. *Sternal plate* trapezoidal in shape, being much wider than long and furnished with only two pairs of hairs. *Genital aperture* normal in situation and appearance; it is protected by the usual thin membranous operculum. *Genito-ventral plate* long and very narrow, the hinder end being sharply pointed. *Anal*

plate pear-shaped, and it has the three usual hairs on its surface. *Peritreme* slender and rather short; it reaches a little further forwards than the coxa of the third leg. Fingers of *chelicera* short, and apparently without any trace of teeth. *Legs*. First leg the longest, and the fourth leg also long, the legs of the second and third pairs being shorter. Ventral surface of coxæ without any strong spurs, only fine setæ or hairs being present. There is, however, a very slight projecting spinule at the distal end of the inner surface of the coxa of the first leg.

Length .9 mm.

Colour (in spirit) reddish brown.

Material. Five female examples found on a Couper's Snake in the London Zoological Gardens (May 5th, 1909).